



*Mayor
visits
Telephone
Exchange,
1950s*

110.22

27.75: telephone

Cambridge TELEPHONES Chronology

This will form part of A *Cambridge 1888-1988 Chronicle*

Wireless telegraphy discovered in Cambridge – CWN 08 08

1878

Telephones were curiosities in 1878 when an undergraduate at Pembroke College fixed up two between his digs in St Andrew's street and a little summerhouse at the bottom of the garden. These were absolutely the first seen in Cambridge 24 09 27, 24 10 04 [1.6]

1892

National Telephone Company institutes phone service [2.2]

1896 06 20

Telephone trunk line between Cambridge & London to open [1.18]

1898

Council forbid erection telephone wires across Christ's Pieces [2.4]

1899 01 23

The telegraph service in Cambridge is insufficient as the Telegraph office is closed at 10 o'clock. Only a few years ago it kept open until eleven. In villages whose residents seldom need to send a telegram at night the outlay would not be justified but as far as Cambridge is concerned an all night service would be very much appreciated. The cost would be small in comparison to the convenience afforded. When it is borne in mind that the university has ties with all part of the world, can it be doubted that it is very often a matter of great inconvenience that it is impossible to send a message by telegram, between 10 at night and eight in the morning? 1899 01 23

1900

1900 02 05

The snowstorm at Cambridge had very serious effects upon the telephone service in consequence of the wires being exposed. On Saturday no less than 100 subscribers of the local company were affected and although the company has brought in assistance from Norwich to hurry the repairs it must be two or three days before the complete system is restored. The company is endeavouring to arrange for permission to lay the whole of the wires underground so the general public will be saved a repetition of the present serious inconvenience 00 02 05

1901 08 15

Councillors considered establishing a municipal telephone system for Cambridge. All the firemen could be wired and every office connected with the Corporation. The first system had opened in Tunbridge Wells where the charge was £5.17.6 to cover an unlimited number of calls. The best instruments were used and each subscriber had a wire to himself, so that he did not hear any other people's secrets and they did not hear his. The existing company had dropped their charges from £10 to £4 to be under the Corporation; if it went down to £4 in Cambridge the ratepayers would get the benefit CDN 1901 08 15

1902 05 15

Cambridge councillors considered a report on a scheme for the establishment of a municipal telephonic system. The probable cost for a system with 500 subscribers would be £10,000. This was a small sum when the council spent nearly double that amount on certain luxuries. £12,000 would cover the cost of putting down facilities for another 500 lines. If the system were adopted subscribers would be able to get on to the trunk line CDN 1902 05 15

1902 08 16

The Cambridge Express has joined us in sounding a note of warning with regard to the proposed establishment of a municipal telephone system for Cambridge. From a financial point of view the experiment would be decidedly risky. Moreover no one can reasonably find fault with the efficiency of the existing telephone service, although everyone would like to see a reduction in the charges. Even in Tunbridge Wells where municipalisation was taken up with peculiar enthusiasm, they have done little than to pay working expenses. CDN 1902 08 16

1903 05 21

The Cambridge Telephone Committee reported that the mass of existing telephone subscribers lie grouped in the centre; the number of existing lines belonging to the National Telephone Company does not exceed 450 in Cambridge and 20 in Shelford. They would provide for 600 lines with poles for 600 more. Wires would be put underground and out of sight. The Council should apply for a licence to work a telephone system of their own with modern instruments 03 05 21

1903 06 06

Sir – I was surprised to read that Cambridge Town Council is to apply for a licence to establish a municipal telephone. Any scheme of municipal trading which involves large public expenditure should be based on the fullest knowledge. The council has no local experience and are certain to have all the competition of a powerful company, admirably managed and not too scrupulous. They have asked advice from a man whose business is to sell schemes and to be the engineer to carry them out; of course he said it would work. Will a ferret suck a rabbit? – G.A. Matthew 03 06 06

1903 10 10

An instance of the usefulness of the telephone as an aid to the detection of crime was demonstrated at the Cambridge Police Court. Detective Marsh was informed of the theft of a bicycle from Mr Edwards of Emmanuel Street and given the description of the suspect. He telephoned to Bishop Stortford and Herts police arrested the man near Buntingford. The prisoner told the court "If I had had another hour I should have been in London". 03 10 10

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1904 01 18

A Warkworth Terrace man told Cambridge magistrates that he believed his neighbours had some artificial means of making their voices heard by him alone: "They use talking machines and electric wires contrived to convey sound to a certain point only. I have seen what look like an electric telegraph wire in their garden beside a system of beams, boards and ropes which I conclude to be part of some telephoning system. Nearby in Melbourn Place there lives a telegraph clerk who searches my room with an exceedingly strong electric searchlight and conveys a message by Marconi's wireless telegraphy to let them know the right time to call out and wake me" 04 01 18

1904 01 27

As I passed through the huge swing doors, the crisp tinkling of electric bells, mingled with a loud confused chatter of female voices, smote on my ear. I was standing for the first time in a Telephone Exchange. I passed through another door into a long low room along the sides of which ran what appeared at first sight to be a huge 'Upright Grand' piano and seated in front of it a long row of girls stretching into an almost dim perspective. Each girl has 200 subscribers to attend to and immediately one lifts his receiver a lamp emits a golden glow and the girl puts a small brass plug in a hole, pushes a lever forward and speaks to him. She then puts another plug in the requested number. 04 01 20

1904 11 14

Some explanation is due to the people who surrounded our offices last night to secure copies of our special edition which we promised for half-past-nine but was not published until an hour later. We had ordered from the Press Association a series of private wires to be dispatched as the Prime Minister's speech was being delivered. But such was the wretched state of the telegraphic arrangements that hardly one of the messages reached Cambridge in under an hour. It is as well that the Post Office is a Government department for any private trader who was so lamentably incompetent would soon find himself in the Bankruptcy Court. 1904 11 14

1905 03 17

A CDN reporter had occasion to send a telegraph message from the Swaffham Prior post office to this paper; he then began to return to Cambridge by cycle; after a leisurely ride he found had beaten the wire. This was an annoyance, bearing in mind the reputed speed of electricity. It appears the message had first to be despatched to Ely where it had to wait before being transmitted to London, from which it was retransmitted to Cambridge. It arrived one-and-a-half hours after being sent! 05 03 17

1905 08 29

Cambridge councillors refused to allow the Post Office to lay an underground cable along Emmanuel Road to complete a telegraphic communication with Ely if telephone wires belonging to the National Telephone Company were also laid. Now the Postmaster will have to exercise statutory powers to complete the work. There is already direct communication with Ipswich, Norwich and Peterborough; recently a private wire giving the state of play in the Cambs v Norfolk match was handed in at Norwich Post Office and in the offices of the C.D.N. eight minutes later. 05 08 29a & b

1905 09 02

Cambridge council refuses to allow telephone company to lay underground cables & they unable to erect poles; want wayleave payment - 05 09 02

1905 09 23

The differences between the Cambridge Town Council and the National Telephone Company have resulted in a grave situation. A writ ordering the removal of poles from Corporation property has been issued which, if obeyed, would disconnect the whole of Fitzroy Street and Newmarket Road from the rest of the system. The crux of the matter is the Council's decision not to allow the Company to lay underground wires. But this would give a more efficient service and they have offered to pay the Council to do the work and give them half-a-crown per subscriber. 05 09 23 & a

1905 12 15

The telephone trouble – charge for poles – 05 12 15

1905 12 22

Telegrams between Ely and Cambridge are transmitted via London and much time is lost. A Cambridge physician received a wire from Ely requesting his immediate presence. He at once despatched a telegram saying he would travel by the next train, hailed a cab and drove to the station. At Ely he had to walk a mile to the house he was visiting – and arrived before the telegram! Considering the intimate connection that exists between the two towns, particularly in the fruit season, this is most undesirable. 05 12 22a

1907 02 09

Sir – when the National Telephone Company started its ‘Local Message Rate’ in Cambridge the charge was 20 shillings paid in advance for 240 calls with any balance carried forward to next year. After a short time the rate was raised to 30 shillings for 360 calls, now it is to be 50 shillings for 600 calls, but there is no rebate for unused calls. The company says that the use made by some subscribers is too small, but they are seeking to enlarge their profits before being taken over by the Post Office – J.C. Simpson 07 02 09

1907 07 20

The Amalgamated Radio-Telegraphy Company, who own the experimental wireless telegraph stations at Cambridge and Oxford, are converting their appliances to the wireless telephone system of Mr Poulsen, the Danish inventor. It is believed that when the arrangements are completed the voice of a person in Cambridge will be audible at Oxford sixty miles away 07 07 20a

1907 08 27

The telephone system has become such an important factor in daily life that the numbers of new subscribers are matters of moment to every telephone user. In order to keep our readers up to date we will publish monthly lists of alterations and additions which include Cambridge Automobile Co, Illsley and Son, Bull Hotel Stables & Sirdah Hotel 07 08 27

1907 10 19

The public telephone, placed at a railway station, in a shop or hotel is one of the cheapest and most useful of modern conveniences. The telephoned message is far quicker than the telegram and there are over 500,000 telephones in the country. The National Telephone Company has already established over 7,800 ‘call offices’ so one is seldom out of sight of one of the familiar public telephone signs. 07 10 19

1908 03 23

Telephone cables being laid, National Telephone Company - 08 03 23a

1908 06 05

There has been an Alpine fever amongst undergraduates, finding a vent in climbing trees along the Backs. The wireless telegraphy station on the Huntingdon Road has been the site of the latest exploit. This is a pole over 200 feet in height which receives messages from Cumnor Hill near Oxford. Two undergraduates merrily commenced the ascent by means of the metal spikes driven in at convenient intervals and managed to reach the top. But the return voyage was not so easily accomplished and they reached terra firma with a distinct sigh of relief. It is a matter for common wonder what object will next receive the attention of this strange species. CWN 08 06 05 p5 [2.3]

1909

“National Telephone Co opened exchange in Alexandra St” [4.2]

1910

1910 08 19

The Crippen capture has caused Cambridge citizens to pay far more respect to the wireless telegraphy pole standing near the Huntingdon Road. More interest has been aroused by the fact that Crippen and Le Neve's whereabouts were noted by wireless than has been manifested since the invention was first made. 10 08 19c

1910 10 28

The National Telephone Company sought to recover rent for a telephone installed at the premises of Herbert Quinsee cycle and motor engineer, East Road. Quinsee said he'd wanted to be cut off immediately it was installed in 1909. It had been fixed in his workshop, whereas he'd asked for it in the showroom. The company said they would put on extra bells, which he would have to pay for. He could not take the apparatus down because it was not his property but as it was not removed people rang him up. 10 10 28e

1911 03 17

Immediately facing the counter at Cambridge Post Office is a 'penny in the slot' telephone call-box, the property of the National Telephone Company. On Saturday it was discovered that the box containing the pennies had been forced open and emptied of just over eight shillings. The culprit must have been a very cool hand for there were clerks at work opposite as well as members of the public continually passing in and out. 11 03 17g

1911 12 02

National Telephone Company instituted 1892, passed to State [2.2, 2.5]

1912 01 19

Telephonic communication between the police-station and certain police-officers' houses was discussed. Some police houses were simply hired in an ordinary manner and they might have to move the telephone when a new policeman came to a village and took a different house to his predecessor. At Shelford the call office was only about 20 yards from the constable's house, but you couldn't call him. The Chief Constable said he didn't want a constable sitting in the house waiting to be called. His business is to be outside, looking after the property in the village. 12 01 19

1912 04 19

Sir – Cambridge Corporation have instructed all persons in the out-lying parts to telephone the Central Fire Station in case of fire. We in Chesterton are in a very awkward position. We have no telephones for public use. The nearest fire alarm post is at Quayside and one would have to walk, run or cycle there, and then fumble about in a very poor light trying to find out how to work the apparatus. We need a telephone call office instead. A doctor might be sent for, goods ordered from various tradesmen or one might even ring up his best girl – Philip Clare 12 04 19f

1917 07 25

Wireless telegraph mast Huntingdon Road damaged by high winds, old sailor climbed to top, 214 ft to repair – 17 07 25a

1920

1920 05 12

Telephone Kiosks. The Borough Council will tomorrow be asked to approve of the erection of telephone kiosks under the shelter at Hyde Park Corner, and near Sidgwick Avenue (or the side of Queens' Road). Suggested sites on the Newmarket Road (near Abbey Road) and on the public footpath on Mill Road (near Catharine Street) have failed to secure the approval of the Paving etc., Committee, and in the former case the Borough Surveyor has been asked to select a suitable position in Sun Street, whilst in the latter the Post Office authorities have been requested to obtain another site on private property. The attention of the Post Office authorities is to be drawn to the need of a

kiosk in the Cambridge Without District and a request made for the erection of one at the junction of Cherry Hinton 20 05 12 CIPof

1920 06 18

Telephone for deaf demonstrated - CDN 20 06 18

1924 09 27

Nowadays telephones are accepted as belonging to the general order of thing that are, and even the proverbial small boy ceases to be curious. Businessmen alternately regard the telephone was an infernal nuisance or an indispensable instrument. Telephones were curiosities in 1878 when an undergraduate at Pembroke College fixed up two between his digs in St Andrew's street and a little summerhouse at the bottom of the garden. These were absolutely the first seen in Cambridge 24 09 27

1927 01 22

With the extension of the Trans-Atlantic telephone service it was appropriate that the first "call" from Cambridge should be to one of the leading American universities. A room at Sidney Sussex College had been fitted up with plenty of receivers and the Vice Chancellor of Cambridge University and the President of Harvard exchanged greeting. Sir Ernest Rutherford then spoke to the President; he said: "We have snow on the ground in Cambridge. Have you also snow". "No I wish we had", was the reply. All were surprised at the clearness of the reception although occasionally it was difficult to distinguish a word owing to the loud volume of sound. Nevertheless effective conversation was possible, there being an entire absence of atmospherics 27 01 22

1928 06 05

The first paid Marconigram was transmitted on June 3rd, 30 years ago. It was sent by Lord Kelvin who was visiting Senatore Marconi's experimental wireless station on the Isle of Wight. In order to illustrate his belief in its commercial future, Lord Kelvin insisted upon paying one shilling for a wireless telegram to be sent to Sir George Stokes at Lensfield Cottage, Union Road, Cambridge. 28 06 05

1928 11 20

Members of the Cambridge public who have been mystified by the appearance of wooden huts in various places will be interested to learn they are police telephone boxes. They will be small sub-police stations. Each will contain a telephone in a cupboard which the public can use to get in touch with the Central Police Station, but not for general calls. The box itself will only be accessible to the police. Thirteen are to be

1929 06 19

Cambridge Post office talk – CDN 19.6.1929

1930

1930 12 20

Cambridge people can now send their Christmas greetings by picture telegraphy – at a price. They must post their picture telegram direct to the Central Telegraph Office at a cost of £1 for the minimum size picture of 15 square inches up to 70 square inches for which the charge is £4 13s 6d. 30 12 20c

1934 01 13

New equipment connects trunk calls in 120 seconds instead of half-an-hour [1.7]

1934 08 28

The opening of the new exchange at Trumpington is the first step towards the great change-over to automatic telephones. Engineers dashed to remove the wooden plugs which set the system working and waited for the first call. Soon a line crackled and a bulb lit up. But it was a false alarm. The second caller had forgotten the changeover and, not getting a verbal answer, hung up. Twice more this

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happened but after eleven minutes a call came through from the Trumpington A.A. box and the new apparatus was officially launched. 34 08 28

1934 09 08

Cambridge automatic telephone exchange progress – 34 09 08

1935 04 06

Post office telephone engineers have been installing the switches and relays necessary to complete the new Cambridge automatic exchange. It the most up-to-date in the country and incorporates new features. Soon subscribers will hear what is known as the 'ringing' tone - 'burr-burr-burr-burr'. If the number is engaged another tone – 'buzz-buzz-buzz-buzz' will be heard while a continuous high-pitch sound means it is unobtainable. Those uncertain of what these mean can dial '91' for a demonstration 35 04 06 & b

1935 05 03

Automatic telephone exchange opens [1.9, 1.1, 1.2]

1936 03 23

The King's Coronation may be televised as will next year's boat race, Post Office engineers were told. "How are we going to do that? Some think that in 10 years' time people who have got the telephone service will want to use those wires for a re-diffusion service for broadcasts. It means that every wire has got to carry a much greater frequency and you will have to re-lay the undergrounds. I cannot see the end of these expansions. None of us can", the Superintending Engineer asked. 36 03 23 & a

1936 10 24

New telephone calls boxes being installed – cartoon – 36 10 24b

1937 06 14

Car struck a telephone kiosk on Trumpington Road smashing it so completely that only the base remained; the roof land upside-down some distance away – photo – 37 06 15

1938 03 30

Telephone Manager's office opens in Cambridge – amalgamation of various telephone services into one body; engineers provided the lines and apparatus but needed sales department & operating staff. Superintending Engineer's office had been in Cambridge for 70 years – 38 03 30

1938 04 25

Telephone developments of future described – 38 04 25b

1939 03 04

Demolition of Camden Place to make way for Cambridge telephone area head office [1.11]

1940

1944 05 05

Telephone supervisor, Grace Curzon retires after 45 years; was one of two telephone operators in Trunk Exchange of Old Post Office. The local telephone exchange was on Market Hill under control of the National Telephone Company. In 1913 the Post Office took control and a combined trunk and local exchange was installed in old Telephone Exchange premises in Alexandra Street. When automatic telephone working was introduced in 1925 it moved to new head Post Office in St Andrew's Street – 44 05 05a

1945 10 08

How the Post Office beat the 'Blitz' – 'fixed bayonets' at G.P.O., Americans and phone boxes – CDN
1945 10 08b

1946 02 12

Post Office launches '999' scheme – instead of '0' for calls to fire, police and ambulance – 46 02 12

1948 07 29

D.E. Knapman, telephone manager of the Cambridge area told Rotarians that there were 4,000 people in the area waiting for telephones. He said there are two separate wires running from the exchange right back to your house which are yours and only yours. It would be impossible to run out a separate pair of wires every time somebody asked for a telephone. They try and forecast 30 years ahead the number of subscribers they will get and then lay cable under the ground. In Sidney Street are seven or eight thousand wires serving Chesterton and the Milton Road districts 48 07 29

1950

1951 10 01

Some 80 Post Office engineers in the Cambridge Telephone area – stretching from North London to the Wash - began work today on converting 1,700 coin boxes on telephones to take 3d instead of 2d for local calls. The increased charge came into operation today when the additional charge for trunk or toll calls was also increased. Some 300 boxes are being converted in Cambridge and work will be completed in a the next few days 51 10 01 [1.15]

1951 12 24

Please give your phone a rest on Christmas Day unless a call is really essential – and allow many Cambridge Exchange operators to have their Christmas dinners at home in peace. The Telephone Manager, Mr W.E. Dance, has made special staffing arrangements which means there will be 30 operators at the switchboard. On other days there are 130 day and 80 night operators at the controls. The normal daily number of calls dealt with is about 11,000 (quite apart from dialled calls). For those who still intend to telephone on Christmas day he offers this gentle reminder – "Sorry but we can give you no concession charges between 6 pm and 10.30 pm on those days" 51 12 24

1953 01 23

A decision to build a new £100,000 telephone exchange in Cambridge was revealed at the annual Christmas party of the male telephonists of Cambridge G.P.O. It will be quite a big new building, in Trumpington Road. Mr G.S. Cumming, the Chief Night Supervisor, said that the night telephonist's job was very important and evening calls provide the greatest degree of happiness that the telephone service gives. During the night most of the calls were vitally important. His staff were really wonderful and their wives had a lot to do with it – they sent the men to work happy.

1955 12 12

The G.P.O. has connected over 6,300 new telephones in the Cambridge area during the past year. Although this is a record achievement the demand for new connections has also exceeded all previous figures. Seven new major exchanges and 30 minor building extensions are planned. During the past year the called handled each day by the operators has approached half a million 55 12 12b-c

1956

Calls up from 3d to 4d [1.24]

1956 11 02

A new telephone exchange to be built in St Tibb's Row will one day house the equipment for Cambridge's link-up with the rest of the country on a national trunk dialling system. Old cottages used for storage, small office units and workshops facing on to Post Office Terrace will be demolished for an extension of the present telephone exchange and in early 1961 engineers will install equipment to meet the needs of 3,000 new subscribers. In 1935 there were 2,700 telephone

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subscribers on the Cambridge exchange; now this has trebled to 7,700 and will reach 10,000 by 1960. 56 11 02d & e

1956 12 01

New equipment developed by Pye of Cambridge means that six times as many people can use radio communications and foreshadows immense developments. Telephones for the use of the travelling public in aeroplanes, railways and road services are now a possibility and a radio-telephone could become a standard fitting in all road vehicles, C.O. Stanley predicted. 56 12 01b

1956 12 04

If you have seen a street fight and want to report it or are a motorist lost in Cambridge and want to know your way, it is simple. You go to the nearest Police Pillar, open the door and pick up the telephone inside. At once you are in touch with the information room at police headquarters. The Mayor made the first 'emergency' call from the Police Pillar in Drummer Street and within minutes a sleek black saloon containing two stalwart policemen drew up. 56 12 04

1957 02 01

Elsie Cousins of Histon works as a switchboard operator at the Guildhall. She really enjoys her job with hundreds of calls daily. With 94 telephone extensions and 13 exchange lines she is pretty busy. She can remember over 100 telephone numbers including those of the homes and offices of most councillors. She cannot remember when last a caller was difficult. Many ask her questions like 'Where can I get married' or want directions to the colleges. 57 02 01

1960s The Cambridgeshire Collection has detailed newspaper cuttings files from this date

1960 11 30

'Telex' is the system businesses use for sending printed messages to one another – a kind of private telegraph service by which the operating of a typewriter keyboard at one end produces a typed impression on a roll of paper at the other. It is used by 40 local subscribers including Cambridge police, Pye, Fisons, Corrugated Cases at Histon, Herbert Robinson and the American Air Force. Now it has been converted to automatic working so by a simple dialling action followed by some work on the keyboard a business in Cambridge can send a typed message to an associate in Glasgow 60 11 30

1962 06 11

New telephone exchange opened, Long Road [1.25]

New Post Office trunk telephone exchange planned – feature – 62 06 11

1965 03 26

New Cambridge Automatic Trunk Switching centre in Long Road opened. Subscriber trunk dialling provides a better trunk service 65 03 26b [4.1]

1966 09 07

Pye pocket radio-telephone exhibited – 66 09 07

1970

1972 07

National Telephone Company opened an exchange in Alexandra Street in 1905, now to demolish demolition [4.2]

1974 06 19

The £2 ½ million extension to the Cambridge trunk telephone exchange in Long Road was declared open. It has more than doubled the size of the original building which was opened in 1965. The ceremony also celebrated the recent completion of STD facilities. Cambridge is the first area in the

Eastern region to have 100% STD facilities. By 1976 Cambridge people should be able to telephone direct to North America and most of Europe, covering 65% of the world's telephones 74 06 19 [4.3]

1976 03 12

Direct-dialling to USA opens [4.4]

1980

1980 04 03

International telephone bureau Lion Yard opens [4.5]

1980 04 21

An entirely new kind of telephone has been developed by Patcentre International of Melbourn. It uses a high-frequency radio link which would 'beam up' to a microwave receiver installed on an ordinary telephone poles or high buildings. A user wanting to make a call would simply stand under one, dial and speak. The cost of his call would automatically be added to his bill. The company think it has a real future but might take time to get accepted and production is years into the future. 80 04 21

1980 10 28

First new blue payphones [4.6]

1981 02 05

Cambridge is one of the centres for a new electronic mail network launched by the Post Office. The pioneer Intelpost service means than information can be delivered in hours in a replica of its original form. Drawings and hand-written matter can be transmitted to 17 other post offices The service is confidential and operating staff who see documents are under legal obligations not to reveal their contents. The rate is £2 for the first page and is backed up by a speedy hand-delivery system. which costs £2.50. 81 02 05a

1981 04 01

Pye Business Communications is marketing a revolutionary office intercom system, the M100S, which, literally, speaks for itself. A voice unit will verbally tell a caller if a particular extension is in a meeting or on holiday. It can also take a video screen which will flash up information such as a user transferring to another extension or an absence or holiday list. All the information is put into a microcomputer exchange by the keys or dials of the intercom and telephones 81 04 01a

1982 01 28

The 670 telephone subscribers at Arrington have become part of a significant step in providing a more reliable telephone network in Britain. For their exchange and the one in Cambridge, both System X, have been directly interconnected – the first such pairing by digital means. Arrington customers will notice faster dialling on the computer-controlled electronic exchange of the future 82 01 28

1982 09 30

System X, optical fibre tested [4.7]

1984 02 03

Cleaners of telephone kiosks have defended their work in keeping them spick and span. One man cleans 50 kiosks a day, washing the inside with disinfectant, cleaning the handsets, wiping the parcel shelf and light fittings. He also has to sweep up cigarette ends, apple cores, sweet papers and other bits. It can take a gallon of disinfectant to clean up after it has been used as a lavatory. On one occasion someone tried to commit suicide by slashing his wrists on the glass panel and the cleaners had to mop up the blood. Kiosks are also a target for vandals with every pane of glass broken and even the door missing. 84 02 03 p25

1984 05 15

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A telephone in one's car must represent one-upmanship. Pye Telecom has just introduced its new radiophone. Electricians are using them, so are plumbers. Not only is it a boon, it is also the most infuriating device ever invented by man. It costs around £2,350 to buy and a further £100 to have it fitted. Then there is a maintenance contract and British Telecom fees of £105 a quarter. For this it is theoretically possible to send and receive ordinary telephone calls to and from your car. In practice they are patchy in the Cambridge area 84 05 15 p16

1985 03 21

Cambridge University's proposed new telephone system has met with an angry response from dons. The scheme was 'buying a racehorse to harness a milk float' and members in scientific departments had already suffered enough with sophisticated equipment that became obsolete in five years. A central switchboard is no substitute for the personal service offered by receptionists in individual departments who had detailed knowledge of staff habits. Departments also object to having to collect the cost of private calls rather than just logging them through the local operator. 85 03 21a

1985 09 24

First cellnet call [4.8]

1986 06 22

System X, optical fibre in operation [4.7]

1986 09 05

The traditional job of a telephone operator, to connect calls, has virtually disappeared now people can dial most numbers direct with STD. They take 999 calls, intercept calls when numbers have changed and deal with faults. Directory Enquiries is one of the busiest sides of the work. This is easier now they use screens to look up the numbers on microfilm instead of going through 'phone books. They are allowed about a minute a call so if an inquiry takes a long time, others may pile up. Calls are taken in sequence: if a caller hangs up and dials again they go to the back of the queue. 86 09 05a

1987 01 10

What could be the oldest phone box in the county has gone on sale in Cambridge. The wooden box with leaded windows has been at the Cambridge & County Bowling Club for more than 50 years. But time has taken its toll and the phone has been moved inside the pavilion. The kiosk, which dates back to the 1930s, is on sale for £50 to anyone who could use a strange-looking shed or has a penchant for the past. (It was bought by a Gt Shelford newsagent who planned to restore it as a garden hut for his children.) 87 01 10 & 13b

1987 11 30

Melbourn-based PA Technology is behind the launch of a pioneering public phone service. ZonePhones are second-generation cordless telephones designed for use in the home, office or street. Owners of the new equipment, which will retail for about £250, can use base stations at distances of more than 200 yards. Its operation is entirely digital with speech transmitted over British Telecom's system like an ordinary call. In time mobile telephones and mobile data terminals will become as common as the ordinary telephone is today, they predict 87 11 30

1989 02 28

Camfax is a new Cambridge company specialising in the supply of facsimile machines. The Harris/3M transmits a standard page of text in as little as ten seconds. As it uses the telephone line, the faster it transmits, the lower the communication costs. It has a no paper memory, retaining communications until more paper is loaded. The most popular model sells for £1,200 and can be connected to a car phone to be used in conjunction with cellular radio 89 02 28

1990 05 02

Rabbit, the new cordless phone system based in Cambridge is to be launched in September. Based at Westbrook Centre. To install numerous base stations – 90 05 02

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